

Cliveden (Chew Mansion)
6401. Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-1184

HABS
PA,
51-GERM.,
64 -

PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADDENDUM
FOLIOS...

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CLIVEDEN (Chew Mansion)

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Location: 6401 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. The house is located in the Germantown (northwest) section of the city.

Present Owner: Cliveden of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Inc.

Present Occupant: National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Present Use: Historic house museum.

Significance: Built as a country residence in 1763-1767 for Benjamin Chew, a prominent Pennsylvania jurist, Cliveden is an outstanding example of Philadelphia Georgian architecture. Probably designed by Chew and Jacob Knor, a master carpenter, the stone masonry house has particularly fine interior woodwork. The house was the site of the 1777 Battle of Germantown during the Revolutionary War, and was extensively damaged by the battle.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1763-1767.
2. Architect: Benjamin Chew and Jacob Knor, a master carpenter, probable designers. It is also known that there were others who participated in the design.
3. Original and subsequent owners: In 1763 Benjamin Chew bought 11 acres of land for L 650 from Edward Pennington. (His property later comprised 60 acres). In 1779 Chew sold the property to Blair McClenachen, a young merchant and outfitter of privateers. But Chew reacquired the property in 1797. His family continued to own the property until June 1972 when they gave it to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Today the property numbers 6 acres.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The people who took part in the construction were as follows:

Jacob Knor- master carpenter
John Hesser- mason
Casper Geyer- stonecutter
Richard Fry- lumber
Michael Fisher- lumber
Nicholas Matlack- lumber
Saltar and Britton and company- lumber
Anthony Gilbert- framing
Eden Haydock- lead gutters
Phillip Warner- painter
Christopher Hergsheimer- blacksmith
William Rush- blacksmith
Samuel Hastings- plaster
David Cauthorn- plaster
John Keyser- mason
William Cowles and Company- urns

5. Original plans and construction: Benjamin Chew played a major role in the designing of his house. He drew up a preliminary plan of the house with English Neo-Palladian features; he had seen a prototypical house in an article titled "A View of the Palace at Kew from the Lawn", published in the Gentleman's Magazine, August 1763. The final overall plan included some major modifications. The five-part plan was reduced to a three-part plan: a central block with two side wings. A courtyard was placed in the rear. (It was later filled in by an addition). The styling was made simpler in order to suit American tastes and means. The Main Hall in the first floor was divided into two parts: a front hall with a central colonnade of Tuscan mode and a rear hall with a staircase. Other features included in the final plan were the lesser structures. They were a stable and coach house (detached from the main structure); a smokehouse; a hen house; and a summerhouse. Landscaping was also included in the design, and it featured gardens, orchards, and statuary.

6. Alterations and additions: The house was physically damaged by the Battle of Germantown on October 4, 1777. Bullets and cannons hit the walls, stonework and woodwork. The damages were subsequently repaired and were paid from Chew's own funds.

In 1868, a two-story addition was added to the rear north side of the main block. It caused the original courtyard to disappear. The rooms were the school room and the lodging room. A window on the second floor stair landing in the main block was converted to a doorway to create an entrance to the addition.

In recent years, the roof was repaired, the east wall of the main block was patched, a patio was added in the rear, and the house was completely rewired for electricity.

When the National Trust for Historic Preservation acquired the property in 1972, a number of notable period furnishings were included in the transfer, with the exception of bedroom furnishings.

- B. Historical Context: Cliveden was the country estate of Benjamin Chew (1722-1820). Chew was born in Maryland. He was trained in the legal profession in Philadelphia and London, and became a judge of the Pennsylvania courts. From 1774 thru the Revolutionary War, he was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and from 1791 to 1808, he was Judge and President of the High Court of Errors and Appeals of Pennsylvania.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The structure is a notable Philadelphia Georgian design, consisting of a main block with a front pavilion and flanking wings.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Main block, approximately 53' (five-bay front) X 44'; rear addition, approximately 20' X 30'; West Wing, approximately 18' X 26', excluding curving arcade; East Wing, approximately 18' X 36'.
2. Foundations: Masonry foundations of superior quality. The front foundation wall has ashlar finish.
3. Walls: The south (front) elevation is constructed of grey stone, possibly of local origin, and has an ashlar finish. Superb sandstone lintels are placed over the heads of all window openings. There is a sandstone beltcourse at the second floor level. Cut stone window jambs are used in the basement windows. The central bay is a projected pavilion which has a pediment at the attic level and is crested with an ornamental urn. Other elevations of the house are of rubble construction. The east and west facades have been stuccoed and scored to simulate a highly finished stone surface. The rear portion of the 19th century addition is of rubble construction. The flanking wings are of rubble construction.
4. Structural system, framing: Bearing wall construction. Structural members for floors, roof framing, etc. are oak. The finest colonial building techniques were employed in the framing.

5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The front entrance is sheltered by a fine pedimented porch supported by two columns. The cornice is dentiled and the frieze is lined with triglyphs. The front door is reached by a fine stoop with two flanking marble lions. A rear two-story porch is adjoined to the main block and the 19th century addition. Other stoops are of masonry construction. A bulkhead on the rear of the structure provides access to the basement.
6. Chimneys: Brick. There are two large chimneys on the main block. There is one chimney on the 19th century addition. Each flanking wing has one chimney.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance has double doors, four panels each. Lesser doors are six- and four- panel types.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All windows are 12-over-12 sash. Most of the glass in these windows is 18th and 19th century. There are exterior shutters on all windows on the ground floor.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof of the main block is covered with wood shingles, probably red cedar. The 19th century addition has a standing seam metal roof which has been covered with asphalt.
 - b. Cornice: There is an elegant wood dentiled cornice around the main block. A similar dentiled cornice is used on the flanking wings.
 - c. Dormers: There are a pair of dormer windows on the front of the main block. They have Gothic sash and are flanked by consoles. There is also a dormer on the rear of the main block.
 - d. Urns: Ornamental urns are on the ridge of the roof and the two front corners of the roof, as well as the one on the central pediment.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The basement, first and second floor plans of the main block are arranged similarly: two flanking main rooms on either side of the hall, with a stairway in the rear. The attic rooms of the main block are arranged in a disorganized way. The 19th century addition has different floor plans. The kitchen dependency, which has connecting doorways to the main block and to the West Wing, is one single space. The one-story addition, attached to the rear of the kitchen dependency and to the east wall of the West Wing, has two rooms. The West Wing has similar floor plans which are two rooms per floor. The floor plans of the East Wing are also similar and consist of two rooms per floor with a central fireplace.

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2. Stairways: The main stairway is situated in the rear portion of the hall behind the colonnade. It is of open stringer construction, with three turned balusters resting on each tread. Scrolled brackets decorate the stringer. All exposed surfaces of the underside of the stairs are paneled.

There is a staircase at the second floor of the 19th century addition that connects with the stair landing in the main block.

A plainly finished service stairhall is located at the west side of the main block.

The East and West Wings each have one stairway.

3. Flooring: All floors are covered with random width pine boards. The basement level floors are paved with brick.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster and wood.
5. Doors: All doors on the two principal floors of the main house are paneled. The wood is probably pine.
6. Decorative features and trim: For room location, each room number as indicated below has a matching number in the accompanying HABS drawings.

Southeast Room (Room 101): The dado in this room is paneled, as is the chimney breast of the corner fireplace (located in the northwest corner of the room). The windows and doors have an eared architrave. A fairly elaborate cornice is similar to the one in the front portion of Room 105, with the exception of the absence of the dentils. There is a continuous chairrail above the dado.

Parlor (Room 102): The entry to this room is crowned by the same magnificent broken pediment that was used in the front portion of Room 105. There is a plain dado surmounted by a chairrail. The windows and doors have an eared architrave, and the jambs are paneled. The elaborate cornice in this room is similar to the others already mentioned, however it features a wall of Troy dentil. The fireplace trim, including the portion of the hearth which extends into the room, is marble. The marble trim around the opening is surrounded by a large egg-and-dart molding. The mantle shelf is in the form of a classical entablature and is supported by a pair of brackets quite similar to those employed in the door frame. The interior of the fireplace is faced with decorative cast-iron plates. A fine tabernacle frame embellishes the chimney breast. The window panes in this room have been etched with the signatures of many important people who visited over the years.

Southwest Room (Room 103): There is a plain dado around the room surmounted by a chairrail. Window jambs are paneled. An elaborate set of bookcases are affixed to the north wall. The cornice is similar to the one in Room 101.

Dining Room (Room 104): The fireplace in this room is completely paneled. A china closet flanks the fireplace on either side. The shelves in the closet east of the fireplace are elaborately shaped as was traditional in china closets in this epoch. A larger china closet is built in the north wall and features Gothic sash in the doors as well as elaborately shaped shelves. Window jambs in this room are paneled. The dado is absent however there is a chairrail. There is a mantle shelf above the bolection molding which surrounds the fireplace opening.

Main Hall (Room 105): A paneled dado is throughout this room. All windows and doors have an eared architrave. Window jambs are paneled. There is a classical colonnade of fluted Tuscan columns, which are approximately 9'-6" high. The columns support a classical entablature, and all ornament is of wood. The two doorways in the front portion of the hallway are crowned with broken pediments which are accented by dentil moldings and are supported by brackets decorated with a floral relief (possibly acanthus leaves). The molding around the ceiling in the front portion of the hall is a complex combination of cyma, convex and concave moldings with an elegantly detailed dentil banding. The ceiling molding in the rear portion of the hall is somewhat simpler, consisting primarily of a cyma and a convex molding. A false door in the stairlanding is actually a window. It is crowned by a full pediment which rests on an eared architrave.

School Room (Room 109): This room is part of the 19th century addition to the mansion. It has a good plaster cornice and a superior plaster decorative pedant in the center of the ceiling (the pendant measures in excess of 2'-0"). There is a closet in this room as well as a large 19th century library case affixed to the west wall.

Servants' Sitting Room (Room 113): This room is in the West Wing. There are two heavy doors, both of which originally went to the exterior.

Dressing Room (Room 201): This room contains original trim. All windows in this room have paneled shutters. There is a continuous chairrail. There are four closets in this room. They have paneled doors, styled in a fashion similar to the

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original doors. The fireplace, located on the north wall, has a paneled chimney breast. Ceiling cornices are of the same caliber as those aforementioned.

Northeast bedroom (Room 202): All windows in this room have paneled shutters. There is a continuous chairrail. The entire south wall is paneled. The situation here is almost identical to the one which occurs in Room 204. East of the fireplace is a closet.

Guest Room (Room 203): All windows in this room have paneled shutters. There is a continuous chairrail, similar to those in Room 201. Ceiling cornice is typical.

Northwest bedroom (Room 204): All windows in this room have paneled shutters. There is a continuous chairrail. The fireplace has a paneled chimney breast. There are closets on either side of the fireplace. The closet on the east side is a fine example of an early clothes closet, complete with the original pegs. The closet of the west has a fine set of shaped shelves.

Center Hall (Room 205): This hall runs through the depth of the 18th century portion of the house. All woodwork is original. There is a chairrail running around the entire periphery of the room. There is a decorative cornice which appears to be identical to those used on the first floor. A window with paneled jambs is located at the south end of the hall.

7. Hardware: Original hardware throughout the house. Many doors have H-L hinges and box locks. Main doors have extremely large hinges and a lock rail. The door in the Service Stairhall has a spring lock. Supplementary wooden locks have been placed on all exterior doors.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Most rooms in the first floor are heated by a Bryant gas hot air furnace, manufactured in 1930. All other rooms are heated by a Bryant steam furnace, manufactured ca. 1960. Floor registers and radiators supply the heat.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house is entered through an entrance gate on Germantown Avenue. This gate is an extremely fine piece of wrought-iron work, and has a family coat of arms and two supportive stone pillars. In the front of the main block is a circular driveway. The rear portion of the driveway leads to the Stable-Office Building. There is a stone wall along the Johnson Street portion of the property. The house faces south.

2. Historic landscape design: Over 200 varieties of trees and shrubs have been planted throughout the property. See the Landscape Plan in the accompanying HABS drawings.
3. Outbuildings: The Stable-Office Building measures 84' X 44'. On the main level there are the following principal rooms: a large office room and four smaller office rooms. Adjacent to the offices are a men's room and a ladies' room, and a small kitchenette. This entire area is finished with painted wood paneling, and has acoustical tile ceiling with recessed fluorescent lighting fixtures. The entire space is heated by a furnace in the utility room in the garage section of the structure. The garage section of the structure consists of two large rooms and a small utility room. There is a stairway which goes to the loft which is used for storage.

East of the Stable-Office Building is a shed.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

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Winchester, A. "Living with Antiques." Antiques Magazine, vol. 76, No. 6, December 1959.

- #### B. Supplemental Material:
- Field Records for the house include photographs of ca. 1763 drawings which are useful for further study. If interested, ask the librarian to bring the records.

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Summer 1972
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Fall 1983

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was jointly sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The project was done by Martin J. Rosenblum, project supervisor; Stanley Runyan, architect (University of Kentucky); and Marianna M. Thomas, student architect (University of Pennsylvania). Technical and other assistance were provided by John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Paul Goeldner, architect, HABS; James Massey, Director of Properties, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Raymond P. Shepard, Jr., administrator, Cliveden; and Blaine Cliver, architect, National Trust for Historic Preservation. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited and compiled the written data in the Fall of 1983, for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress. The photographs were taken by Cortlandt V.D. Hubbard in 1967 and by Jack E. Boucher in 1972.

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U.S. Department of the Interior
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